NUMB. XLIII.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

——— Hic murus aheneus esto
Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa. HOR.

MONDAY, AUGUST 17. 1724.

But thou shalt flourish in immortal Youth,
Unhurt, amidst the War of Elements,
The Wreck of Matter, and the Crush of Worlds.
Add. Cato.

Mr. PLAIN DEALER,

I Am an old Man, as you are, and when I reflect on the fantastick Vicissitude of human Affairs; when I consider the Shortness of Life, and the small Pretensions I have to any longer Share in it, it fills my Mind with something grave, solemn, and, I must own, melancholy; but when I give my Thoughts a more unbounded Scope, and pass over that short Intermission of Life, into the Contemplation of an Eternal Being, my Mind recovers from that Gloom, which the first Reflection fill'd me with, and grows gay, in Proportion to the Influence which this latter has upon it.

I was, last Night, reading that celebrated Speech of *Cato*, whence I have taken the Motto, with which I head this Letter, and whether it was from the serious Thoughts which that Soliloquy inspired, or the last strong Glimpses of a Mind almost expiring, and habituated to such Speculations, I am not able to determine; but I was no sooner fallen asleep, than the following Dream, or, rather, *Vision*, grew into Form, and fill'd my Fancy.

METhought the dreadful Hour was come, in which I was to resign this Life; my Bed was surrounded by a silent Company of weeping Friends, whose Sorrows touch'd me more, than my own approaching Dissolution, which happen'd in less Time, than human Nature can conceive, and, therefore (though at that Period I felt it sensibly) it is impossible I should now describe it. I was no sooner freed from the Incumbrance, and Obscurity, of *Matter*, but my Soul became refined to such an infinite Degree of Conception, that my Eyes, having nothing to interrupt, or confine their View, were strengthen'd with such piercing Beams, that they darted every Glance through an innumerable Progression of Worlds, and illuminated me with a particular, and perfect, Knowledge of the Harmony, and Fabrick of each extended System.

Whilst I was thus lost in Contemplation (for infinite Space, like an endless Source, still afforded me new Objects to nourish that inextinguishable Thirst of Knowledge, which is the Employment of eternal Life) I felt a Heavenly Transport, which diffus'd itself, swifter than Thought, through the Frame of my new Being; and which, at the same Time it made my Soul tremble with its Influence, invigorated, and enabled it to support the Energy.

I now enjoy'd perfect Felicity, and whilst my Soul (whose Desire of Knowledge increased in proportion with its Power to gratify it) imploy'd each different Sensation in pursuit of that Branch, which was peculiar to its Nature; on a sudden, I heard an universal Crack, which seem'd to arise from the whole Number of created Worlds, and resounded from Globe to Globe, with a long Continuance of reverberated Uproars.

At last, the Chain that link'd them in that harmonious, and dependant Order, in which, from the first Moment of their Creation, they have perpetually been moving, shiver'd, of itself, into Millions of Pieces.——The loosen'd Orbs, thus disunited, began to roll, with an unconceivable Swiftness, through the vast Expanse of Space, and met, and shock'd each other in the dark Vacuity! The *Sun*, now robb'd of Light, whirl'd rapid, and irregular! The *Moon* let loose her Seas, and rain'd a Deluge in her falling: The *fixed Stars*, that, from the Birth of Time, had kept their appointed Stations, no longer aw'd by the all-powerful *Word*, broke loose, and rush'd together. Prodigious was the Sound! and horrible the Conflict! The Elements, forgetting their respective Qualities, and urg'd by the immutable Decree, met, all, and *mix'd*, and lost themselves, in ruinous Confusion.

When all seem'd bury'd in profoundest Darkness, the wild Uproar ceas'd at once; and, as I wonder'd at this sudden Silence, a Pyramid of Fire broke thro', that in a Moment, enwrapp'd the Whole, and, having nothing left to prey upon, at length, devour'd itself.

Thus was the *End* of *All!* When from that inaccessible Brightness, where the Divine Presence conceals, yet makes itself known, a Beam of Day shot out, which lighting up the infinite Extent of Heaven, and rendering it transparent, discover'd all its Glories. I there perceiv'd the Stream of Life, which running through the midst of Heaven, *quicken'd* where-ever it roll'd, and watering the Tree of Knowledge, nourish'd it eternally: Next, I saw numberless

lefs Swarms of Beings, like myſelf, that fill'd the Vaſtnefs of Infinitude, and ſeem'd loſt, like me, in Wonder, Praiſe, and Adoration. I heard a Voice (which had more Influence, than the moſt perfect Harmony of human Art, and communicated itſelf to all alike) cry, *Come, Eat of the Tree of Knowledge, and Drink of the Water of Life.*

Immediately the Angelick Hoſt, and all the Children of Earth (who, by Obedience to this Command, were become one, and the ſame) eat and drank, as they were commanded. The firſt Effect of this, that I found on myſelf, and perceived in all the reſt, was a perfect Recollection of whatever I had done ſince my firſt entering into Life: Various were the Conſequences! The *Ungrateful*, the *Murtherer*, the *Miſer*, the *Falſe Friend*, and the *Rebel*, remember'd, with Horror, their paſt Crimes; and grew frantick, at every Thought, with the Conſciouſneſs of what they had merited. They felt the ſevereſt Pangs of that moſt lively of all Torments, *Deſpair*; but the *Juſt*, and thoſe who had the leaſt to reproach themſelves with, found, yet, they had too much to anſwer for, when, in the Book of Record, which was thrown open to the View of all, they perceiv'd, that the minuteſt of their Thoughts were regiſtered.

Now we all became ſenſible, how eaſy the Rule was by which we were to have liv'd; and how adapted to the required Obedience of human Nature! Whilſt we were thus lamenting our unhappy States, and aggravating our Miſery by Self-Conviction, in an Inſtant, we diſcover'd a fiercer Blaze of Light, and beheld the myſtick Veil drawn off, that ſhrouded the Almighty's Preſence: Raiſed on a Throne, to which the Brightneſs of the Sun would have been dim, the Divine Father of all Things diſclos'd Himſelf; His Countenance was mildly aweful; Paternal Tenderneſs ſhone out in every Feature of his Face, and diſcovered a Concern for us, which, we knew, proceeded from a Divine Idea, *That, if He ſhould be Merciful, he muſt be more than Juſt.*

On his Right Hand ſat the *Second Perſon*, our known *Redeemer*; In Him the Beauty of the Father was divinely manifeſted; In Him, the Glory of His Power at once was ſoften'd, and exerted. Behind him the fatal Figure of that Croſs, on which he ſuffer'd, hung, like a dreadful Comet, prognoſticating the Hour of Judgment. On the Left, was placed the *Third* adorable Perſon, in the, now, no longer *Myſtick Union*. In Him, an equal Mixture of the Father, and the Son, reveal'd itſelf, uniting, in his Countenance, the ſevereſt Glory of the One, with the moſt ineffable Sweetneſs of the Other.

Beneath, and on the Right of the World's triumphant Saviour, ſat his Twelve Diſciples: Their Eyes were fix'd on their Great Maſter's Looks, and ſeem'd to borrow thence, by Reflection, all their Softneſs, and their Luſtre. In equal Stations, on the Left of the *Holy Spirit*, appear'd thoſe Antient *Philoſophers*, who, thro' the Dusk of Superſtition and Idolatry, by the Light of Reaſon, and mere Nature, ſaw, and taught, One True, Eternal God; and in Defence of that Belief, had Courage even to ſuffer Martyrdom.

Whilſt I contemplated this Divine Appearance, I heard a Voice, which, proceeding thence, pierc'd the profoundeſt Space of Heaven, proclaiming, *That each ſhould be his own Judge, and, from the Teſtimony of his own Conſcience, acquit, or condemn himſelf.*

Immediately all the *Juſt*, and thoſe whoſe Conſciences, by due Allowances for the Frailties of human Nature, could acquit, and encourage them, advanced, and (with a Modeſty, at once more humble and aſſured, than any thing on Earth) aſſerted, and made known, their Virtues and Obedience to the Divine Commands, concluding, that, though they had acquitted themſelves, and were intitled, by the *unalterable Word*, to Everlaſting Felicity, yet could they not pretend to claim it, 'till they had received the Almighty Sanction, which they hop'd for, through the Mediation, the Merits, and the Blood of his beloved Son, who died for Man's Redemption, Pardon, and Salvation. After which, they proſtrated themſelves before the Throne, and, receiving Diadems of Glory, *were admitted as Partakers of Beatitude without End.*

I then heard the ſame Voice repeat, *Let each be his own Judge, and from the Teſtimony of his own Conſcience, acquit, or condemn, himſelf*; But, far from ſeeing any more advance (though ſtill there were infinite Numbers remaining) I obſerv'd, that they drew back, reproaching each other, beating their Breaſts, and making ſuch Variety of Lamentations, that the violent Noiſe awaken'd me, in ſuch a Mixture of Joy, and Horror, that it will be long before my Memory wears out the Impreſſion of ſo ſtrong a Viſion, which, if it affects you enough, to make you judge it worth publiſhing, I ſhall have *ſlept*, as I love to *wake*, for the Service, or Warning, of others.

I am SIR,

Your conſtant Reader,

C. D.

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